

Testimony for House Appropriations Committee  
SB 155 Older Montanans Trust Fund  
April 3, 2007

My name is Charles Aagenes and I am the Director of the Area IV Agency on Aging based in Helena. Area IV serves the six counties of Broadwater, Gallatin, Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, Meagher and Park. Area IV is one of ten Area Agencies in Montana and our role is to help Senior Citizens live the best lives they can, as independent as possible for as long as they can. I am speaking today on behalf of the ten Area Agencies who serve senior citizens throughout all of Montana.

Some of the more commonly recognized services that we help provide and fund are senior congregate and home delivered meals, senior transportation, homemaker/caregiver in home services, and nursing home Ombudsman. Also, Information & Assistance staffs from Area Agencies have helped thousands of Montana seniors wade through the morass of Medicare prescription drug coverage.

At the current estimate the six counties of Area IV is home to 18,820 people 65 and over. The most current projection that we have is that by the year 2030 our six counties will be home to 45,600 people 65 and over. That is about 145 percent increase. Some individual counties have a much greater increase. Lewis & Clark County is projected to have a 232 percent increase over that time and Jefferson County will increase by 334 percent. We all know that just because a person becomes a senior citizen it doesn't mean that they need public help to maintain an independent lifestyle. Thankfully many senior citizens have the good health and financial resources to remain independent. We do know, however, that approximately 30 percent of all seniors live on modest fixed incomes and benefit greatly from some help. It may be as simple as the congregate meal at the senior center that helps them stay fed and healthy. Many need other kinds of help to stay independent. In my view the goal of the Older Montanans Trust Fund is to set aside resources now to help pay for services that older Montanans will receive sometime in the future. I applaud this Legislature for looking to the future and hope that you will support this bill.

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